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ABSTRACT

The result of interviews with 77 students on California state university campuses, this paper explores a set of guidelines designed to facilitate communication between white faculty and minority students. The paper is divided into three sections, each dealing with one of the three areas of the guidelines: classroom interaction, advising, and evaluation. Each section begins with a discussion of student responses to questions from the interviews, formulates general principles for dealing with the concerns students expressed, and discusses ways that these principles can be applied. The conclusion of the paper discusses the importance of college professors trying to be as fair as possible to all students. (Interview questions are appended.) (DF)

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GUIDELINES FOR CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN STUDENTS AND FACULTY

by

Mercilee M. Jenkins[1]

These guidelines were designed to facilitate communication between students and faculty.[2] Their purpose is to apply knowledge about cross-cultural communication to classroom interaction and advising and to provide concrete suggestions for improving communication between predominantly white faculty and students of color.

The guidelines are based on information and ideas derived from interviews conducted at San Francisco State University during the Fall, 1982 semester and from similar projects on other California State university campuses.[3] At San Francisco State, a total of 77 students were interviewed: 20 individually, 33 in small groups from introductory speech classes, and 24 as a group in a Black Studies class. The interviews focused on students' experiences with faculty in the classroom and in advising sessions (see Appendix for interview questions). The total demographic breakdown was as follows: foreign students - 6, Native Americans - 3, Latinos - 10, Blacks - 36, Asian - 11, White - 11. The purpose of this study was not to conduct a representative survey, but to gather anecdotal information from students at San Francisco State which would help faculty to understand the experiences and perceptions of students of color. These experiences became the basis for suggested methods to improve faculty-student interaction especially across lines of cultural difference.

There are three main sections to the guidelines: classroom interaction, advising, and evaluation. Each section begins with a discussion of student responses to relevant questions from the interviews, formulates general principles for dealing with the concerns students expressed, and discusses ways of applying these principles.

CLASSROOM INTERACTION

Questions in this part of the interview focused on students' participation in classroom discussions. Every student interviewed at San Francisco State University responded that instructors usually required them to participate in class and that participation was part of their grade. Some of the ways in which instructors were seen to encourage or discourage participation are of course independent of racial or ethnic considerations, though they suggest the need for "affirmative action" to ensure more egalitarian participation by all students.

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Students felt that instructors encouraged participation in their classes by such methods as calling on students by name, offering encouragement in facial expressions and nonverbal gestures, giving students time to respond, and treating everyone equally. In general, students appreciated faculty who were responsive to their contributions and gave them positive reinforement for participating.

Students also identified ways in which faculty discouraged student participation. These included not really listening, ignoring the speakers' content, shutting up the speakers or cutting them off, treating them patronizingly or contemptuously, and acting surprised when they did well. Students reported that faculty, even those who professed to want student participation, seemed to get so caught up in their own lectures that they had no time to call on students. Others reported that they got mixed messages from instructors; sometimes the instructors were supportive of student comments and at other times they interrupted and dominated the conversation. The students interviewed believed that some students were encouraged to participate more than others. An Asian-American male student indicated that one of his instructors called on white students more than on members of other ethnic groups, even though only half the class was white. As a result, he said, "I don't participate or ask questions as much. I just sit back and listen." Consistently, students who disliked or had mixed feelings about participating in class were concerned about making a mistake, feeling stupid, or being put down or judged negatively by the teacher.

Students' feelings about participating in class differed widely, both individually and to some extent by gender and ethnic group. American Indian, Latino and Asian-American students (particularly women) mentioned cultural prescriptions against speaking up which carried over to classroom interactions. In addition, they felt that faculty, perhaps because they held cultural stereotypes of the quiet Asian or the silent Indian, did not expect them to participate, so they did not. Recent articles by Asian-American scholars, such as Wong (1983), indicate that throughout their schooling Asian-American students are positively reinforced for being quiet and obedient. She reported that Asian-American students comment that in public high school they thought they got A's just for not causing any trouble. What it means to be a good student in high school changes in college, where more active verbal participation is expected while at the same time it may be assumed that Asian-American students cannot meet this expectation. This situation is compounded by the fact that even third or fourth generation Asian-Americans did not feel that the English language is their own, although they may speak no other languages. English is a very white identified language. As one student in a basic speech class commented, "No matter how many generations Asian-American I am, I still have people say that I speak English very well for a foreigner." Thus, it is not surprising that Asian-American students may be reluctant to speak. A cultural preference to be listener-oriented rather than speaker-oriented is turned into a subtle way of keeping Asian-Americans in their place by racial stereotyping. While Asian-American students do well in technical fields, such as math and sciences, without developing their communciations skills they will be limited in their opportunities for advancement at management levels. Thus, subtly and inadvertently Asian-Americans are kept in their place, although they may appear to be very successful academically.

The classroom participation of students of color is directly affected by the presence or absence of cross-cultural materials and by the way they are dealt with. Most of the students interviewed were pleased when instructors included materials pertinent to their cultural group and more likely to participate when materials were thus culture specific. Though some were embarrassed at feeling "singled out," others resented the absence in most classes of materials relevant to their cultures. An American Indian student commented that she was never given a chance to introduce culturally-specific material because her social work classes ignored her culture. She said, "Faculty think they understand, but they don't." Students who had taken ethnic studies classes wanted to introduce this material in other classes, but were often afraid to do so because of the risks involved. One Black student reported that it was "not worth the risk of his grade. The teacher may think I'm trying to be 'smart'." Another Black male student commented that he "tries to avoid stepping on toes." He said, "I swallow a lot of my comments in order to maintain my GPA." He said that he would like to participate naturally and "not have to plan and think out responses to the teacher's perspective." A female Black student put it more succinctly, "You can get a D with pride or get an A and keep quiet." Those students who did take the risk of introducing material from ethnic studies classes into other courses often met with positive responses. One Filipina student reported that she introduced some information about Hawaii in her humanities class. The instructor seemed surprised because he did not expect her to say anything, but he was very responsive. She added, "I often don't bring up information because I sense that the teacher would not be responsive, so I end up limiting all my participation."

Given these students' anxieties about being misunderstood, it seems appropriate to actively encourage students to share culture-specific knowledge and experience; however, it is not appropriate to ask students of color to act as spokespersons for their races. Half of the students interviewed indicated that on at least one occasion they had been asked to be a spokesperson for their race. Responses to these experiences were largely negative. For example, a Latino student indicated that he had been asked several times to comment on Chicano experiences, at least once to hear the instructor question his accuracy. In an English class, when students were reading the novel, Sula, a middle-class Black female student was asked what it was like to live in the ghetto. Another Black woman reported a similar incident in an English class in which she was asked to read an excerpt from a novel in Black dialect, even though she did not speak this dialect. These students resented the faculty's acceptance of stereotypes assuming that all Blacks live in the ghetto and speak Black English.

Students of color may wish to participate more actively and honestly in class but may be reluctant to do so if the instructor does not deal with cross-cultural material in a sensitive manner. The goal is to find ways to encourage students to share experiences, knowledge, and perceptions drawn from their unique cultural backgrounds without making them uncomfortable, without preconceived or stereotypical expectations about their responses, and without overgeneralizing from their comments. Clearly, these students are carrying some painful anxieties into their "white" classrooms, anxieties which should be sensitively handled. Faculty, then, need to be aware of their own perspectives and biases and how they may be affecting student participation.

These responses and a previous review of literature (Jenkins, 1981) formed the basis for the following general principles for developing equitable participation in the classroom and accompanying strategies for putting these principles into action.

General Principles

Above all, be honest and unambiguous about how important classroom participation is in your class, and about how it will be assessed. If it is important, the following "principles" will be applicable.

1. Develop strategies for equalizing participation.
2. Respond positively to every student's effort to participate.
3. Allow time for student participation.
4. Encourage students to share culture-specific knowledge and experience while avoiding asking them to act as spokespersons for their races.

Application of General Principles

1. Methods of eliciting student participation may be culture-specific. Standard practices for conducting discussions, i.e., raising hands and being called on, may favor some students over others. For example, Kochman (1981) noted that Black students are more comfortable speaking out in class than raising their hands and waiting for their turn to speak. They are more used to a quick exchange than to one person's holding forth for some time. By ignoring students who speak "out of turn" we may be extinguishing their participation without realizing it.

   Developing alternatives to the standard turn-taking practice will allow students with differing experiences to participate comfortably. Many students' cultural orientation and experiences may dictate different styles of interaction. It helps to make it clear at the outset of the course why you desire and expect student participation and what form of participation is acceptable. Here are some "alternate" forms:

   One technique is to have the faculty member act as a facilitator for discussion rather than the discussion leader. Students take turns speaking without being called on by raising their hands. If you have never tried this you may think that chaos will ensue, but faculty who have used this approach say that they rarely have to intervene to maintain order. Instead, students learn to monitor each other's participation—reminding the overly active to share the floor, while allowing the less active an opportunity to speak. Students are often better able to take direction from each other

than from the instructor. A good technique to get the discussion started is to call on a quieter student to give her/his opinion and then open the discussion to all students. It is also a good idea to phrase questions in such a way that there is no right or wrong answer. This will encourage all students to respond without fear of giving the wrong answer. Students should be familiar with the ground rules of this type of discussion and should understand the extent of their responsibility.

Another classroom technique that encourages student participation while equalizing the interaction is group answering. Let students form self-selected small groups to discuss answers among themselves before directing the answer to the entire class. This approach often allows students to feel more comfortable about speaking out, since they have the opportunity to discuss their ideas with a few people first.

A third approach, specific to question-and-answer participation, is to ask every student to write down the answer to the question, and then to randomly choose a student to read her/his answer. This approach equalizes the opportunity for all students to participate as well as giving the students an opportunity to formulate their thoughts before being asked to respond. Students may also be asked to write their answers on the board, or the instructor may write the students' answers on the board for all to see and respond.

2. Student participation can best be encouraged and extended if each student's effort is recognized positively. If faculty avoid asking questions which have one right answer, an answer they already know, then they can genuinely view and validate each student's participation as a real contribution. Then, too, a "correct" answer may come in differing forms from students with different cultural experiences, and the teacher may have to ask further questions which require students to restate, rephrase, clarify or expand their ideas. In any case, students must know that their answers are worth pursuing. Examples of such questions are: "Can you summarize that last point?" or "How might you restate your first example?" or "What do you mean by _____?" It also might be desirable to ask other students to help clarify another student's statement. This not only helps the other students listen attentively, but promotes interaction between them. Examples of redirective questions are: "Can anyone paraphrase what has just been said?" or "Can we take Susan's idea and develop it further?"

It is a special skill to take an answer that is off target and help the student develop it into an acceptable response. But this is the challenge of the teacher who views class participation as integral to learning. Showing the student that you are listening is essential. Statements such as "That's an interesting approach," or "I understand what you mean," or paraphrasing like "So what you are saying is . . . ?" continue to encourage active student participation.

3. Often students do not participate because they feel the instructor's "agenda" does not allow opportunity for discussion. If students are led to believe that there is too much to cover and not enough time to cover it, they usually will not initiate questions or discussion. Instructors must provide quality time for discussion if they are to equalize the participation of students. Otherwise, students who enjoy competing to answer direct right/wrong questions, and who are skilled at answering questions in a manner similar to the instructor's speech style, may gain an advantage over students whose backgrounds do not emphasize these skills. Students in the cross-cultural classroom should be allowed ample opportunity to develop their ideas, and to express them in a variety of ways. The alternatives to the traditional lecture-discussion format outlined here will allow the instructor to develop important points through classroom interaction and will make students more responsible for their own learning.

4. Encouraging students to share culture-specific knowledge without making them into spokespersons for their race is a delicate but essential task in the cross-cultural classroom. Among the strategies suggested by participants in this project (faculty and students) are these:

   — Use enough cross-cultural materials (examples in lectures, readings by scholars of color, films, etc.) so that students will know that such materials are valued, and that there is not one single perspective or world view constituting a "norm" against which all else is measured. Wong (1983) made some specific suggestions about how to give Asian-American students a greater voice in the classroom. In addition to using materials written by Asian-American authors whenever possible, she suggests discussing the relationship of language identity, communication, and culture. For example, in an English composition class Asian-American students may be asked to write about the "quiet Asian-American," their relationship to the English language, or parent/child communication. She specifically referred to the last chapter in <u>The Woman Warrior</u> by Maxine Hong Kinston as an important source on silence and learning to speak up.

   — Explain why you are using such materials, directly, succinctly, and without great fanfare; the point is that it is only natural to do so. If most of your materials do pertain to white, middle-class experiences and perceptions, point out that this is the bias of the class, and indicate your receptivity to other points of view.

   — If you think that there are interesting cultural variations on a specific topic or issue, and you really do not have time to research them yourself, <u>say</u> so and invite the class members as a group to contribute their perceptions and knowledge. But avoid singling out a Black or Chicano student and asking her/him to comment on "the Black experience" or "the Chicano community."

— Share your own cultural experiences when appropriate as a way of indicating that such sharing is "safe"; all of us have ethnic backgrounds that to some extent have shaped our lives. Of course none of us can speak for all the members of our ethnic group, and the kinds of cautions we exercise in generalizing about our own experiences can illustrate how individual experiences can illuminate certain topics without leading to racial or ethnic stereotypes. For example, in a discussion about families, a Jewish instructor might say," My grandparents were working-class Russian-born Jews who like many in their generation believed in marrying for appropriateness and falling in love later. Of course not all of them followed that pattern. What about your grandparents?"

— Many kinds of assignments can allow students to pursue culture-specific materials or develop culture-specific knowledge, from personal experience essays to book reports and research papers. Use some of these as the basis for class discussions, working out with the students modes of presentation that feel comfortable to them; encourage group projects that either allow students from one cultural group to explore one aspect of their culture in depth or that offer students from different cultural groups a chance to bring their cultural knowledge to bear on a single topic.

— Have small groups discuss assigned materials and ask students in the groups to consider the way their cultural backgrounds have affected their responses to the materials. Ask a reporter from each group to summarize for the class as a whole.

— If materials you are using in class seem to have racist biases or implications, say so and ask the students what they think. If students make comments in class that seem to you to be racist, ask other students to respond. Charges of racism, of course, can get out of hand, but sensitive, well-facilitated discussions of the issue can be instructive about the nature of "bias," "objectivity," "universality"—terms frequently used in the university.

-- Ask a colleague to observe your class and to evaluate and make suggestions for improving your interactions with your students. Two faculty might agree to do this for each other.

— Never condescend to or patronize your students. They will know it. Acknowledging culture-specific knowledge and exploring the implications of race and ethnicity is an intellectually challenging endeavor. It is possible, if difficult, to be appreciative, sympathetic, and demanding at once.

ADVISING INTERACTION

Responses from students interviewed at San Francisco State University indicate that students of color would welcome faculty mentors with whom they had an ongoing relationship. Although many students indicated that they generally had little if any help from advisors, they also stated that they would like to be advised by a supportive faculty member. They felt that while information on program requirements and university regulations was readily available, they lacked guidance in clarifying their educational needs in relation to their career goals. They sometimes felt that they already had to know what they wanted before they could seek advice. Students were interested in finding an advisor who would spend time talking to them and who would take a personal interest in them. Students appreciated faculty members who seemed to really listen to them and do more than answer specific questions. They were aware, however, that faculty did not always have the time to advise them in this way.

Students who reported positive advising experiences had major advisors whom they had known previously as teachers they liked. One student said, "It is better to talk with a teacher you like than an assigned advisor." Such faculty members gave students encouragement and support, as well as counseling about which classes to take. Students also sought support from their peers. Several students reported that groups such as those established by the Student Affirmative Action office were particularly important in combating the isolation they sometimes felt as students of color in a particular department. The La Raza psychology group was one group mentioned as "an important network for sharing information about instructors, classes, and how to survive in the department."[4]

Negative advising experiences involved lack of support for students' interests and goals and insensitivity to them as individuals with particular cultural backgrounds. Assumptions on the part of faculty based on gender and cultural stereotypes sometimes led them to misdirect students. Students reported that they were told to lower their expectations by taking easier classes and easier courses of study. For example, a Black female wanted to major in one of the sciences in preparation for veterinary school. She went to see a major advisor who told her that veterinary science was a very difficult program and she should consider something less demanding, such as nursing. He said this without having seen her records or knowing anything about her past performance in school. While she was waiting, she saw white students being welcomed into the program rather than discouraged from pursuing their goals.[5]

Many students expressed frustration at the lack of faculty recognition of their personal struggles and achievements. One interviewee commented that "there was no recognition of my being a Black woman and my struggle to get here." Students were discouraged by advisors who told them what to take, instead of asking them what they wanted to take and helping them adapt their interests to university requirements. In general, students reported that faculty emphasized what the requirements were, rather than listening and responding to their individual needs.

The concerns that students expressed demonstrated the importance of developing the general counseling skills of faculty as well as increasing our sensitivity to and awareness of the particular needs of students of color. Faculty, of course, are aware of these needs, but often are unsure as to how best to meet them. In a faculty workshop at San Francisco State held in conjunction with this project, faculty expressed three important concerns which affected their efforts to advise students: 1) They did not agree on a definition of advising. Should they be counseling students and in what ways? Should they be acting as mentors? 2) They all agreed that time was a crucial problem. Advising students well was very time-consuming and they did not feel they had enough time to do it adequately. 3) They also agreed that faculty were not rewarded for the time they did spend advising students. Time spent advising students did not count toward tenure and promotion and might even interfere with activities, such as writing and research, which were necessary for academic advancement. These issues need to be addressed by the univerasity as part of any program to develop faculty skills in advising students.

Counseling Models

Several counseling models have been developed which we can apply to counseling students of color. Schneider, Klemp and Kastendiek (1981) developed a competency model of effective teachers and mentors in nontraditional degree programs. This model was intended for adult students but seems equally applicable to students of color. They defined a mentor as "a person who works directly, in one-on-one interactions, with adult students, to assist them in planning and implementing their particular degree program" (p. 2). They identified the factors which contributed to effective mentoring by interviewing faculty who were identified as superior classroom teachers and mentors. On the basis of their analysis of these interviews they identified five areas of competence: 1) student-centered orientation, 2) humanistic-learning orientation, 3) creating a context conducive to adult learning, 4) grounding learning objectives in an analysis of students' needs, and 5) facilitating the learning process. The specific points mentioned under each of these competency areas address many of the concerns expressed by the students interviewed at San Francisco State.

The behaviors associated with each of the competency areas identified above resemble some of the basic skills necessary for effective counseling. Salovey (1979) identified the skills he felt were the foundation for effective counseling: 1) non-verbal and minimal verbal attending skills, 2) open questions, 3) paraphrasing, 4) working with feelings, and 5) summarizing and integrating.

These skills roughly correspond to a series of stages that constitute the counseling process as defined in a training program for faculty at California State University, Northridge. Don Dorsey, a counselor at Northridge, is working with engineering faculty who are being trained as mentors especially for

students of color.[6] He identified the key counseling stages (relationship, exploration, personalizing and action) as they applied to student-faculty advising. These stages of the counseling process give rise to the following general principles:

General Principles

1. Let the student direct the interview.
2. Let the student do the talking.
3. Do not offer solutions before you know what the real problem is.
4. Do not give advice; it does not help students cope.
5. Do help the student devise a specific plan of action once you agree on a definition of the problem.
6. Ask the student to check back with you for a progress report.

Application of General Principles: The Counseling Process

In the first or "relationship" stage, the advisor attempts to establish rapport with the student by listening and learning what the student's frame of reference is. It is important to respect and accept the student as s/he is right now and not to impose one's own wishes and expectations. Sometimes the best lead-in to a counseling session is silence. Let the student start off and tell you why s/he has come to you for advising. Faculty have a tendency to be too directive in advising students. Let the student take control. Opening questions, such as "What brings you here?" or "What feels important to you?" or "Could you help me understand what's important to you?", do not lead students away from their own real needs and let students take responsibility for directing the session. The advisor needs to listen and also to be attentive to nonverbal cues which will reveal how the student is feeling. Sometimes the verbal message (Which courses should I take?) and the emotional message (I am confused, anxious, scared) may be quite different.

The goal in the first stage is to establish a relationship with students which makes them secure enough to explore their problems with the advisor. In the "exploration" phase, the advisor helps students explore their situation. What they want to accomplish, how they feel about it, what it means to them, and what is getting in the way of accomplishing these goals. The stated impasse is often not the real problem. For example, the least frequent cause of poor performance among students of color is lack of ability (Beal & Noel, 1979). Fear of failure is a much more important factor. If students do not try, they do not have to take the failure personally. Also, students must feel

rewarded for studying. For students of color, there are often conflicts between doing what is necessary to achieve their academic goals and preserving their cultural values. Students of color and faculty of color alike spoke frequently during this project of feeling increasingly schizophrenic as their academic work progressed, separating them more and more from their peers and communities of origin. In addition, delaying immediate gratification for long-term goals is more difficult if these long-term rewards are uncertain. People of color have access to education, but may still face discrimination in the job market. Without a tradition of accomplishment in a particular field, it is difficult for any member of a racial group to feel that s/he can succeed.

The faculty member's goal at the next stage, "personalizing", is to help the student explore the underlying situation and what her/his own role is in the impasse. What can the person do to resolve the impasse? What is stopping the student from doing it? The advisor can help the student identify feelings through paraphrasing what the student says and through asking appropriate questions. The advisor's role is to focus the discussion on the student's feelings rather than on content alone, on the present rather than the past or future, and on herself or himself rather than on other people. This technique will identify the real problem and also provide some parameters that will bring it within the student's control. Through careful listening, paraphrasing, and questioning the advisor can aid the student in assuming responsibility for the solution. The biggest danger for faculty at this phase is offering a solution too quickly. Faculty are used to providing the answers, rather than helping students find their own answers.

In the final stage of the interviews, the faculty members guide students towards action to achieve their objectives. In this "action" phase, students and advisors jointly work out a course of action, which is aimed toward achieving specific goals. Usually, it is helpful to ask the student to experiment with a new course of action and check back with you in a couple of weeks to see if it is working and if additional lines of action are needed. This is the point at which faculty may draw on their expertise and experience to help students improve their performance. The process, however, is still a mutual one and the student is ultimately responsible for the solution. Still, if faculty can take the time for such an interview, and the care and trouble to ask for follow-up visits, these interventions can make a great deal of difference.[7]

Faculty members at Northridge who participated in this training process were impressed by what they were learning. Many of them felt that they were sensitive to minority students' needs when they came into the program, but now they realized there was much more to learn. One of the techniques used at Northridge was to videotape counseling sessions with students of color and then to analyze the tapes. Faculty at Northridge were amazed at the difference between how they talked to students when first videotaped and how they were able to interact after training. For example, in the pre-training interviews the faculty member did most of the talking while in the post-training interviews the situation was reversed. In the first interviews, faculty were too quick to offer answers to the students' questions based on their own experience rather

than that of the students'. There were also many changes in nonverbal behavior on the part of both the students and faculty which indicated that in the later interviews the faculty members were really listening to the students and that the students were much more actively involved in the interview process. Faculty advisors were more likely to be sitting forward, nodding their heads and showing other signs of attentiveness. Students were also more likely to be sitting forward and talking in an animated and more personal manner.

EVALUATION

A crucial aspect of student-faculty communication involves the instructor's evaluation of a student's work in the form of grades and written and oral feedback. This is an obvious area of potential conflict between students and faculty. Faculty should remember that students' complaints about grades may indicate a deep anxiety about whether the faculty member feels the student is capable of doing good work. Conflicts about grades may be symptomatic of the more implicit cultural differences between students and faculty alluded to in the previous two sections.

The responses of students of color interviewed at San Francisco State University were similar to those reported on other campuses.[8]

1. Many students felt that race and/or gender affected faculty expectations or evaluations of their performance. Students of color felt they had to work harder than white students to get good grades. Black and Latino students in particular felt that faculty had lower expectations of them and graded accordingly. Faculty expected them not to be prepared for college work and were surprised when they did well. One student stated, "Like when you take a test and get a bad grade, then get a good grade--the teacher acts surprised. If you are white they might be less surprised. Instead of congratulating me, he accused me of cheating. We're going to have to work twice as hard to be considered equal, to prove ourselves." Another student reported, "Racism is a part of grading. Like, he's Latino so he doesn't know what he's saying." He went on to relate a classroom experience in which the person before him had given a report that took an hour. This did not leave enough time for his report. He was told he would be graded down for a short report. He felt that this short shrift was unfair, insulting, and biased.

2. Conversely, students also complained that they were graded inconsistently from class to class, sometimes too easily. A Black male student reported that he got grades of B's on his papers from one instructor and then D's from another instructor the next semester. His conclusion was that the first instructor "didn't want to teach me. He didn't want to bother telling me what I needed to do to improve; he assumed I couldn't learn."

3. A third complaint was that faculty did not give enough feedback to students of color in order for them to improve their grades. They felt faculty spent more time with white students. When they attempted to follow faculty instructions for improving their grades, they still did not get the grades they felt they deserved. For example, a Black male student felt that he was deceived by a faculty member concerning how he might improve his performance. "If I do this and that, I'm told I'll receive a certain grade. I do it and I still don't get the grade." Similarly, a Black female student stated that when she received a B on a paper, she asked the instructor what she needed to do to get an "A". She was told to clean up her typing errors, did so and still got a B. Each of these students felt that there was something elusive and frustrating in the instructions they received. The feedback did not indicate what was <u>really</u> expected of them.

Thus students, particularly Black and Latino students, reported that sometimes they received higher grades than they deserved because faculty did not want to teach them how to do better and sometimes lower grades than they deserved because of low expectations of their performance. They felt they were not given as much opportunity for improvement because they were not getting as much feedback as other students.

Students of color were concerned about faculty's having expectations of their performance based on racial sterotypes. These expectations, however, were not always low. Asian students and some foreign students complained that they were expected to do better than whites in some areas, particularly math. A Turkish male reported that he was not expected to make mistakes in math, because his instructors knew he had a better background in that area. An Asian female stated that her teacher expected Asians to be mathematically inclined. She felt that her fellow students had similar expectations. "They sit next to me in math here, and I don't do all that well." The effects of such expectations on student performance have not been analyzed at the college level yet students feel them, whether positive or negative, as a burden.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The following general principles can help in examining and adjusting our evaluation procedures and criteria in order to equalize as much as possible our students' chances for success:

1. Devise our grading criteria in terms of the competencies we desire our students to have.

2. Make evaluation criteria as concrete and explicit as possible.

3. Develop methods for insuring that our students are not prejudged or stereotyped.

4. Give feedback as complete, specific and meaningful as possible and as many opportunities for revision and additional work based on this feedback as possible.

Application of General Principles

1. Our notions of competency may be culture-specific. Develop criteria which reflect a cross-cultural balance in the abilities they measure. For example, evaluate a variety of written and oral skills; reward cooperative efforts among students as well as competition.

2. By making evaluation criteria explicit, you may avoid inadvertently discriminating against students from different class and racial backgrounds. If your criteria are implicit, those students with a cultural background similar to your own are likely to have an advantage in figuring out what you really want. Using written assignment sheets will help make requirements clear. In addition to written instructions about content, acknowledging particular preferences for format and other mechanical requirements will make it clear to all students what your criteria are. Faculty differ widely on such requirements, so students may not be sure what to expect.

3. In order to insure that they grade students as fairly as possible, many instructors grade tests and papers without looking at students' names. Finding out about individual students' backgrounds and interests is also a way of avoiding grouping them together by race or ethnicity and treating them as if they were all the same. At the beginning of the semester, ask students to answer a few questions about their preparation for the course and their interests. This information will help you get to know students as unique individuals.

4. To overcome possible biases in evaluation due to gender or race, consider what each student would have to do to get an "A". Then give the student the necessary feedback to improve to this level. This approach counteracts the possibility of having lower expectations for some students and encourages the students to perform at their highest level. In order to provide students with equal access to you for feedback, you may want to consider using some class time as well as office hours to schedule at least one or two appointments with each student (if class size is 30 or less) over the course of the semester. In large classes, obviously this is not possible, but some instructors make it a point to arrive ten minutes before class starts and stay ten minutes after in order to answer students' questions. Just letting students know you are interested in talking to them, and following up on this will not only encourage all students to talk to with you, but may be particularly important to students of color who otherwise might be reluctant to take up your time.

But feedback is meaningless unless students have a chance to act on it and learn from it. Accordingly, whenever possible give students an opportunity to submit revised work or additional assignments based on your suggestions. They will learn more and they may well "pull up their grades" and their confidence.

CONCLUSION

We realize that many faculty do not have the time to follow all the suggestions in these guidelines. We also realize that many will have complex and legitimate reservations about some of the observations and suggestions here, as well as questions that we leave unanswered. What about the student of color who <u>is</u> a poor and unwilling student? What about the student of color who has learned to "con" teachers by manipulating their liberal guilt? How can we ask an individual faculty member to compensate for the systematic racism in our society? How can a faculty member advise a student of color who--accurately--insists that systematic racism is part of the "presenting problem"?

All we can do here is to suggest that faculty can improve the quality of <u>all</u> their students' academic lives by teaching, evaluating, and advising as fairly, honestly, compassionately, tough-mindedly, and attentively as humanly possible. Yet white middle-class students on the whole tend to "make it" through the university even without such excellence and vigilance. It is the nontraditional students--especially students of color--who can benefit most from our extra efforts, our heightened consciousness. In return they have much to give us, if we learn appropriate ways to ask.

END NOTES

[1]The author would like to acknowledge Catherine Speich for her assistance interviewing students during the research phases of this project and Sally Jo Elkington for her contributions to the composition and typing of this report. Special thanks is also due to Deborah Rosenfelt for editing.

[2]These guidelines are intended as a follow up to my report, "Student-Faculty Communication: Cultural Diversity as a Resource in the Classroom," which was developed during the first year of the project on "Cross-Cultural Perspectives in the Curriculum" and included in the manual Cross-Cultural Perspectives in the Curriculum: Resources for Change, edited by Deborah Rosenfelt (1981). A version of these guidelines is available from the Speech Communication Association under the title Removing Bias: Guidelines for Student-Faculty Communication.

[3]Two important sources of information and ideas were the Minority Engineering Program at California State University, Northridge, Director, Raymond Landis and the Professional Development Program at the University of California, Berkeley, Associate Director, Uri Treisman.

[4]Such student groups have also proved successful in supporting minority students in mathematics and science at University of California, Berkeley and in engineering at California State University, Northridge.

[5]Similar experiences were reported at Virginia Commonwealth University by John F. Noonan (1980) and Adelaide Simpson (1979).

[6]I attended one of the training seminars conducted by Don Dorsey for the Faculty Advisors for Minority Engineering Students (FAMES) at California State University, Northridge in March, 1983.

[7]Beal and Noel (1979) indicated that faculty contact was the single most important factor in retention of students of color.

[8]See Noonan (1980) and Simpson (1979).

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APPENDIX

CROSS-CULTURAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Mercilee M. Jenkins

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Gender:

Age:

Ethnicity:

Year in School:

Major:

Number of semesters at San Francisco State:

Degree Expected:

Number of hours per week you work:

Number of children, if any:

S.F.S.U. COMMUNITY

Do you belong to any student groups or organizations? What are they?

Do you have a group of friends on campus?

Do you study with anyone?

Have you taken any ethnic studies courses? If so, which ones?

How do you feel about going to school at S.F.S.U.? Like/dislike & why?

Have you run into any problems adjusting to university life?

Grade Point:

Do you think your grade point is an accurate reflection of your achievements at San Francisco State?

Does your academic performance meet up to what you want it to be? What hinders? What helps?

Do you feel you were, or are, as equally prepared for university work as your classmates?

FACULTY LECTURES

MATERIALS AND TOPICS

In your classes outside Ethnic Studies, is relevant cross-cultural material presented? Is some of the material used in texts or lectures culturally biased or gender biased?

EXAMPLES: Are racist or sexist examples used?

TOPICS: What type of topics and materials has an instructor used which have really interested you?

LANGUAGE: Is the language used inclusive or are assumptions made concerning class, race or gender? That is, who is "we" or the "average person" assumed to be?

HUMOR: Are racist or sexist jokes made by instructors or students?

STYLE OF SPEAKING: Are you comfortable with the way material is presented? Do you understand the terminology, etc.? Do instructors seem to speak a different language than you do?

PARTICIPATION IN CLASS DISCUSSIONS

Do your instructors expect you to participate in class by asking questions, giving answers or making comments?

How do you feel about participating in class? Like/dislike? Why?

What does the instructor do to facilitate or discourage student participation?

What has been the response to your contributions?

Have you ever introduced material from your ethnic studies classes into other classes? What has been the reception to this material?

Have you ever been asked to be a "spokesperson for your race" in class? If so, how did you feel about this?

How does faculty awareness of your racial, ethnic or cultural background promote or hinder your classroom participation?

STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTIONS

Do you talk to faculty before or after class? How often? Why? What sort of responses do you receive?

Do you see faculty during office hours or by appointment in their offices? How long do such meetings usually take? How would you describe these interactions?

Do you feel that race and/or gender has affected faculty interactions with you?

Do you feel that faculty expectations or evaluations have affected your performance?

ADVISING

Do you have an advisor(s) at S.F.S.U.?

Where have you gone for advising?

Have you been satisfied with your advising at S.F.S.U.? Why or why not?

(depending on above)

What has been most helpful?

What has been the biggest problem?

What would you like to see happen?

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Could you give me some other examples of postive and negative experiences you have had with faculty in class or in advising which stand out to you?

Do you identify with any faculty on campus as role models or mentors?

Are race, gender, age or area of expertise factors in this identification process?

Is there anything else that faculty could do to facilitate your success in school?

How would this assist you to meet your educational goals?